

'Shell' program lets you forget DOS

While Macintosh users have their cute little icons to drag around and gawk at, DOS users have had to tough it out with terse, cryptic, keyed-in commands. Because of this sorry state, many PC owners acquire some type of "shell" program to aid in organizing their hard disk. My favorite in this category has been a program called XTree. Now there's a new — and far more powerful — version that I like even more.

This newest version — called XTreePro Gold — has all the features of the earlier version plus some I've been longing for. The look and feel of the older program remains. Once you've loaded it you have a graphical display of all your directories and files. The hierarchical nature of DOS instantly makes sense when you see all the parent-child relationships of your subdirectories neatly stacked.

Scooting a cursor bar up or down takes you to any level directory; hitting the return key toggles you through small and large window displays of your files. You can sort those displays by name, date,



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big chunks of your directory tree. With just a few keystrokes you can "cut" a subdirectory — and all files and subdirectories underneath it — and reattach it to a parent directory at any other level. The "prune" feature lets you delete an entire directory — and everything underneath it — in one fell swoop.

■ **Log multiple disks.** You can work with multiple drives at one time. A split screen lets you view and compare any two drives or directories side-by-side. You can tag and manipulate files simultaneously on any of the logged drives

or size. Then you can tag multiple files for moving, copying, deleting, renaming.

Here are some new features of the latest version:

■ **Graft and prune.** This is a slick way of rearranging

using global commands.

■ **Edit files.** This is one feature I missed in the old XTree program. Now, not only can you quickly view the contents of files, but you can edit them as well. XTree comes linked with an easy-to-use text editor called 1Word that jumps into action with a mere keystroke.

■ **View files in their native format.** The old XTree let you peek inside any text or "ASCII" type file with ease. Now you can view the contents of Lotus 1-2-3, dBASE, and word processor files as well. The feature, called "auto-view," lets you scan a list of files on one side of the screen while it displays their contents on the other. There's a slight delay as it formats files from a program like WordPerfect, but it's considerably faster than firing up an application program just to check on the contents of a file or two.

■ **Launch applications.** As with many shell programs, you can set up a "point-and-shoot" menu within XTreePro Gold for starting various programs. Considering how

long it takes to initially load this program, however, I found this feature less useful. A simple batch file menu system is far quicker.

On the downside, XTree's backup feature is limited. It can't handle large files that span more than one floppy, and doesn't have the means to tack on descriptive notes to file names. But then, with the easy-to-use, but sometimes slow, file preview feature, you can peek into files to jog your memory.

■ **The Bottom Line.** This newest version of XTree confirms my allegiance to the product. Of the many new features, my three favorites are the split screen to view different directories or disks, the grafting and pruning of directory branches, and the text editor.

XTreePro Gold is a product of XTree Company, 4330 Santa Fe Road, San Luis Obispo, Calif. 93401. It costs \$129.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity.